



Jenna Harma, President
Connecticut Counseling Association
March 17, 2015

Testimony in regards to SB 1089: An Act Concerning Mental Health Services, Section 4

To the esteemed members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Jenna Harma, and I am the President of the Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA), the professional organization that represents counselors, counseling graduate students, and counselor educators and supervisors in our state. I have also been a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) for the last ten years. I am submitting testimony with regards to SB 1089 in hopes that you will consider adding Licensed Professional Counselors to the list of clinicians included in the proposed statute.

CCA is in support of Section 4 of the proposed statute knowing that the behavioral health practice incentive would encourage mental health providers to work in designated underserved areas, helping to meet the pervasive mental health needs of this population. However, this proposal fails to include LPC's as qualifying for this incentive, while two comparable master level disciplines, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT's) and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW's) are included. LPC's, LMFT's, and LCSW's are three disciplines with similar graduate and post-graduate training, scope of practice, and reimbursement of services. They are three comparable mental health service providers and therefore LPC's should be included for this valuable opportunity as well.

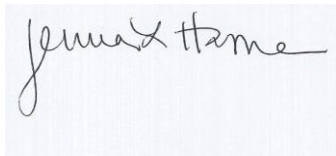
We urge you to consider including LPC's in SB 1089 Section 4 for the following reasons:

- LPC's can and do make significant contributions to the diagnosis and treatment of those with mental and emotional disorders, including those in high-needs, underserved populations all across the state.
- In Connecticut, master's level mental health practitioners have similar training and similar scopes of practice.
- The CT statutes allow LPC's to engage in psychotherapy and other mental health services at a similar level as LCSW's and LMFT's. Specifically, Chapter 383c, Section 20-195aa establishes that LPC's may engage in "evaluation, assessment, analysis, diagnosis and treatment of mental, behavioral or interpersonal dysfunction... includes. The statutes further state that LPC practice "includes but is not limited to, individual, group, marriage and family counseling..." These statutes make clear that LPC's are permitted by law to engage in psychotherapy at a level of care similar to other masters prepared clinicians.
- Like LCSW's and LMFT's, LPC's are entitled to and receive reimbursement from Medicaid

- and other third party payers at similar levels.
- Our training more than adequately prepares LPC's to serve diverse and underserved populations. Required coursework, supervision, and continuing education requirements include theory and practice related to treating diverse populations. Our ethical codes further underscore the importance of working toward social justice and expert care for diverse, impoverished, and other underserved groups.
 - The National Health Service Corps includes LCSW's, LMFT's and LPC's in the federal Loan Repayment Program that also serves areas designated as underserved communities. If LPC's are reimbursed by the federal government, the state of Connecticut should do the same. The state of CT should follow the standard set by the federal government and permit LPC's to receive incentive just like other masters prepared mental health clinicians.

If included in this proposed bill, the state's 2,218 LPCs would help meet this critical mental health treatment need. We therefore urge the committee to add LPCs to the language of this proposed bill. Thank you in advance for your consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jenna L. Harma", written in black ink on a light blue background.

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